Xc 38

Hats off to the European Yacht of the Year in the Luxury Cruiser category. Niels Jeppesen, Mr X-Yachts, tells Chris Beeson she's built for the brand's early fans, now grown up and calmed down since the '80s

NEW BOATS TRIED & TESTED

'We won the One Ton Cup seven times in the '80s,' says Neils Jeppesen, designer and founder of X-Yachts. Success breeds loyalty, but 'our loyal clients got older. They wanted cruisers with bigger tanks, heavier engines, more comfortable cabins, easier handling. They wanted long-distance cruising, they wanted to enjoy time at anchor.'

For those clients, Jeppesen designed the Xc range. 'These are not easy times,' added Jeppesen, 'but we've sold 120 Xc yachts – and they're not cheap. 60% were clients new to the brand.' But old habits die hard and performance is only slightly compromised. 'In winds under 5 knots, our Xp (performance) range will outperform the Xc range, but I usually put the engine on then because the kids want to get back.'

Performance

Unfortunately, that's what we found on arrival at Hamble, 4-7 knots of true wind. Undeterred, we set full main and 106% genoa and were soon logging 4-5 knots upwind at apparent angles of 30-35° in 6-11 knots of apparent wind, tacking through 110° and never dropping below 3.5 knots. Then we hoisted the cruising chute, unsnuffed, and logged almost 6 knots beam reaching in just 4-5 knots of true wind. For a solid yacht – she displaces 5% less than a Najad 380 and 2% more than the new Bavaria 40 – these are blistering figures.

Living below

Drop the neat, cascading washboard and stainless steel grab rails see you safely down the four curved steps. Grab the galley's fiddles and admire the lustrous khaga mahogany interior, lightly padded headlining and screwed-down sole. Headroom throughout is over 6ft and with two hatches, two hull ports and four opening sideports, all with fitted blinds, light and ventilation are first class.

The J-shaped galley looks very secure on either tack and there's plenty of Corian worktop between the sinks inboard and the heavily insulated 140-litre coolbox. Below this surface is the separate, front-opening Isotherm fridge. Lighting is perfectly positioned, ventilation is great and ventilated stowage is abundant. All that's missing is a few fiddles in the lockers.

'These are not easy times but we've sold 120 Xc yachts – and they're not cheap'

Designer Niels Jeppesen

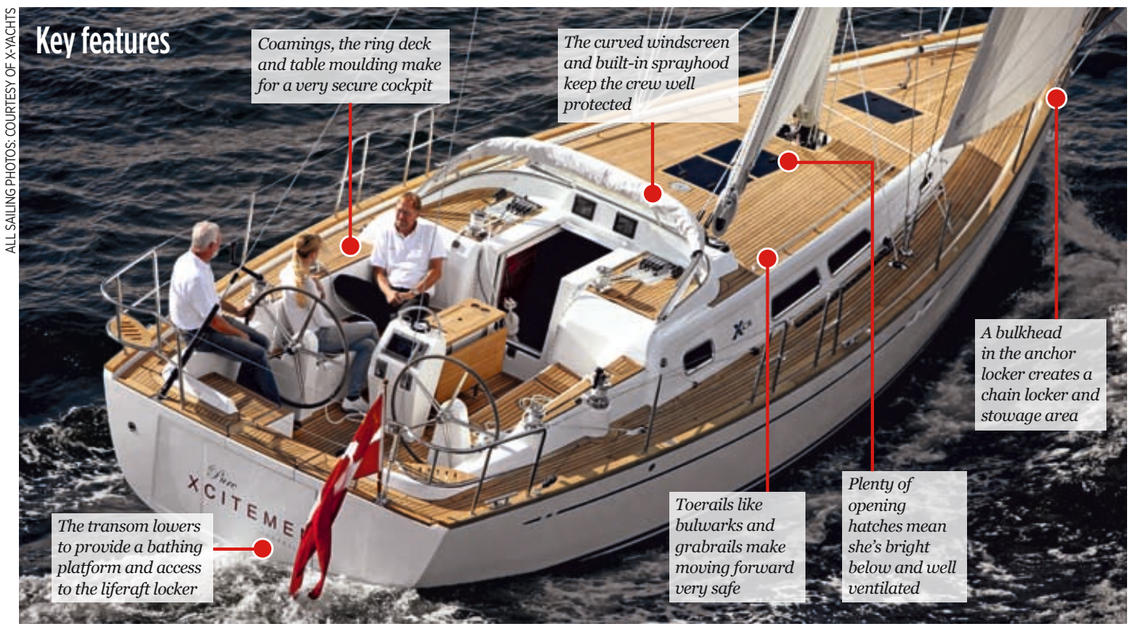
The chart table is a good size, but there's less than 5cm (2in) of stowage beneath it. A bin locker holds almanacs, there's more stowage inboard and below the seat and ample space to mount electronics.

Aft of the chart table is the heads, with 6ft 2in headroom and a teak inlaid sole for better comfort underfoot. The shower is forward, separated by an opaque screen and a folding acrylic door protects the door's luscious grain. The toilet is a touch far aft to use accurately while standing and seated, the cockpit hatch next to your head lacks modesty. The wet locker outboard is shared with the battery charger and seacocks, among them the toilet intake, which looks too high to work properly on starboard tack.

The saloon settees are 6ft 8in long and 2ft 7in wide with seatbacks removed. There are plastic water tanks and batteries under the seats. Lanterns and flexible reading lights add to the halogen illumination.

Neither cabin has an en suite heads, but the forward one, with 6ft headroom, is great. Light from hull ports, opening coachroof ports and the forehatch bathes the cream hull cladding. Under the is 6ft 11in by 6ft berth, hinged, vented boards lift to reveal ample stowage and there's an amazing amount of well-ventilated stowage elsewhere in the cabin.

ALL SAILING PHOTOS: COURTESY OF X-YACHTS



Sleek looks, top quality, and an excellent cruising cockpit – pricey but good value too

The aft cabin has 6ft 2in headroom and a 6ft 9in by 6ft berth, though the removable engine cover eats into it. Below is the engine battery box, water filter and electric bilge pump. Opening ports in the coachroof and cockpit provide ventilation and the light switch for the cabin light is inside above the door. Stowage is plentiful by normal standards, but not a patch on the forward cabin.

Design

Like most X-Yachts, the Xc 38 was designed in Hamble, where Jeppesen spends much of his time. Compared to X-Yachts' performance 38-footer, the Xp 38, she has V-shaped forward sections with more rocker, a deeper hull form for better headroom and a lower aspect ratio rudder with more aft rake. Beam is only 4in wider than the Xp 38 despite being around 25% heavier. Her SA/D ratio is 18.8, between the Najad 380 and Hallberg-Rassy 372, and her D/L ratio is 217.8, so her hull's speed potential is close to the Bénéteau First 38.

Construction

Hull and deck are Divinycell foam-cored, bi-directional E-glass with solid laminate at the keel and through-hull fittings. Rig and keel loads are borne by a

'Walk down four curved steps, grab the galley's fiddles and admire the lustrous khaga mahogany interior'

An attractive, secure and functional galley

Clean-lined, elegant saloon but stowage is a little limited

Good stowage in the light and airy aft cabin

The forecabin has endless stowage and great light

An excellent heads except for the toilet location

Secure, good stowage and thoughtful design – ideal

PHOTOS: GRAHAM SNOOK

ABOVE: She has the stiffness to carry her sail area well and she's set up to make sail handling a breeze

INSET PHOTO GRAHAM SNOOK YM Photo

galvanised steel grid laminated into the hull, as are the structural marine ply bulkheads. The lead-antimony keel bulb is bolted to a cast iron fin, which is bolted to the grid. The rudder is a foam-cored glassfibre sandwich on an aluminium stock.

Sailplan

We had the 106% genoa, but there is a 94% self-tacking option. She has a fractional aluminium spar by John Mast with two sets of sweptback spreaders and discontinuous rod rigging as standard, plus indexes engraved on the turnbuckles for repeatable rig tweaks – a practical, sporty touch. The split backstay is hydraulically adjustable and the main is trimmed on a mid-boom track forward of the windscreen.

The bathing platform folds down to reveal a built-in ladder and the liferaft locker under the cockpit

Deck layout

Quality is evident: pristine teak, Ronstan deck gear, Andersen winches and flush Moonlight hatches. The coachroof bulkhead forward of the 8ft cockpit seats is wonderfully contoured for comfort and the table, complete with recesses for VHF radios, cups, mobile phones and so on, provides excellent bracing. If it was a foot further forward, there would be somewhere to sit under cover of the windscreen's integral sprayhood. The table's aft end houses the compass, plotter, fuel filler and the unfathomable controllers for the Raymarine ST70 instrument screens flush-mounted in the windscreen moulding. There's a giant cockpit locker extending all the way aft so, if you're careful with your stowage, you can squirrel vast amounts of kit away and preserve its exceptional access for maintenance.

The helmsman can reach the Andersen 40 mainsheet winches but not the primary 46s. The port-side 40 halyard winch is electric. Walk aft between the twin wheels, each with a Jefa chain-and-cable system driving independent quadrants, and there's a ring deck above the positive transom. This improves safety without reducing cockpit space and, says Jeppesen, it's a distinctively rare design feature. The starboard quarter locker provides secondary access to the cockpit locker and houses the control for the bathing platform, which has a built-in ladder. In the port quarter is a separate gas locker that hauls under the coaming to improve locker access.

Except for the jib sheets and the genoa furler forward of the coachroof, all lines are ducted – the mainsheet below the sidedecks and the mast lines beneath the coachroof's teak – to banks of Spinlock XCS clutches. Stout bulwarks and grabrails make the passage forward secure and scuppers keep it dry. There's a remote-operated Quick windlass and a double bow roller built into the bow platform, but it can only handle one anchor at a time. She has a two-part anchor locker, with the chain locker forward of a bulkhead, leaving the aft section for stowage. The rigid bobstay allows a cruising chute to be flown from the padeye on the platform. There's no fairlead from the bow roller to a cleat, though a block on the downhaul padeye would provide a suitable lead for a snubber line.

Under power

The Xc 38 has a 40hp Volvo diesel engine and a three-blade folding prop on a saildrive as standard. She makes 6.9 knots at 2,000rpm and flat-out at 2,750rpm we recorded 8.4 knots. She turns in just over a boat-length forward and, oddly, under a boat length astern. The wheels never became too heavy to handle. ▲

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UNDER SAIL

PERFORMANCE
Though built for stronger winds than the feeble Force 2 of our test, she was very impressive both upwind and downwind. Her hull is easily driven and the rig is man enough to cope with the extra ballast demanded by her comparatively shallow draught. Oh, for a Force 4!
9/10

AT THE HELM
Light winds robbed the helm of any feeling but she turned with alacrity and there wasn't a trace of slack. Views forward were excellent, main winches within reach and the many helm positions were great, but you can't lean on the lifelines and steer – a shame.
9/10

ON DECK

DECK LAYOUT
All the gear is top notch and generally the deck is laid out beautifully, right down to the rub rails that protect the coamings from sheets. The only small gripes are that the sprayhood covers none of the table and that there's no fairlead from the bow roller to a cleat.
9/10

SAILPLAN
She strikes the right balance of safety, leisure and control. With sheet tweakers, bottlescrew indices and an adjustable backstay, her performance roots are evident but she was relaxingly simple to sail. I'd prefer a larger genoa, though.
9/10

BUILD

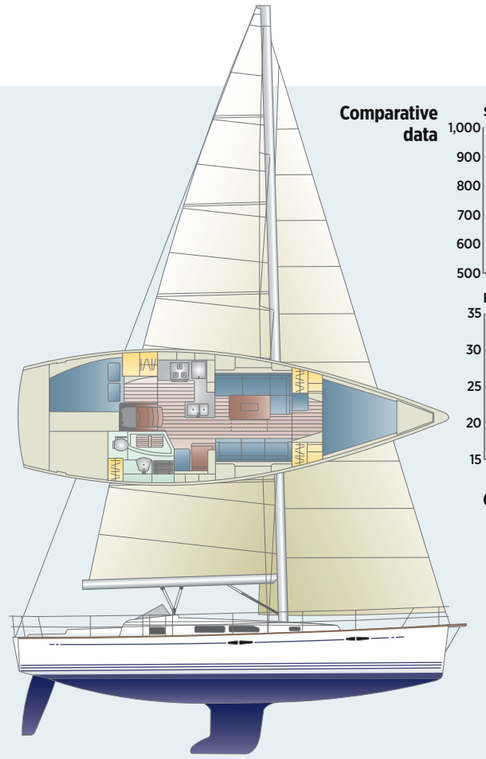
DESIGN & CONSTRUCTION
We couldn't find any rough edges to the finish. She's exceptionally well built. She's well proportioned and seamanlike touches above and below show the amount of experience that's been designed into her. Faultless.
10/10

MAINTENANCE
Maintenance access is excellent. Via sole panels, bulkhead panels and in lockers, access to all the systems is easy. Plastic tanks fight diesel bug and inspection hatches make tank cleaning easy and behind the switch panel, all the fuses and relays are at hand.
10/10

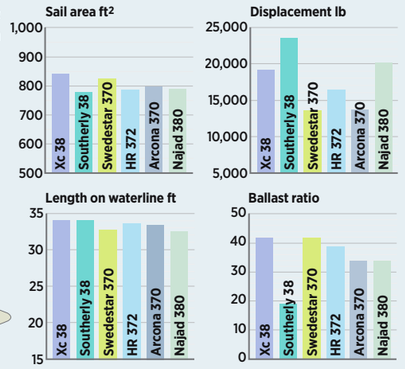
TECHNICAL

Xc 38

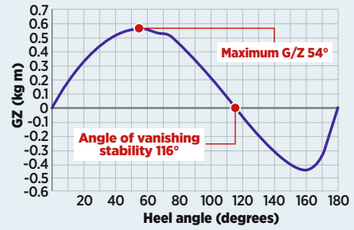
- **Price** £308,894
- **LOA** 11.58m (38ft)
- **LWL** 10.38m (34ft)
- **Beam** 3.8m (12ft 6in)
- **Draught** 2m (6ft 6in)
- **Displacement** 8,700kg (19,180 lb)
- **Ballast** 3,650kg (8,448 lb)
- **Sail area** 78.4m² (843sq ft)
- **Engine** 40hp
- **Diesel** 200 lit (53 gal)
- **Water** 375 lit (99 gal)
- **D/L** ratio 217.8
- **SA/D** ratio 18.8
- **Ballast ratio** (%) 42
- **RCD category** A
- **STIX** 35
- **Designer** X-Yachts
- **Builder** X-Yachts
- **Tel** 023 8045 3377
- **Website** www.x-yachtsgb.com



Comparative data



G/Z curve



ARTWORK & GRAPHS: MAXINE HEATH

THREE OTHERS TO CONSIDER (Priced at similar specification, inc 20% VAT)

1 Arcona 370 – £242,570
Built in Arcona's Estonian facility, she's very good looking, more powerful and set up for short-handed sailing, but has less volume

2 Hallberg-Rassy 372 – £256,188
Yacht of the Year 2010 and worthy of the laurels. Lighter, less volume but possibly the closest rival to the Xc 38

3 Najad 380 – £301,000
Rock-solid build from a real blue-chip name and much more relaxed performance from this centre-cockpit design

BELOW DECK

LIVING BELOW
She's wonderfully bright below, well lit and ventilated, and the amount of stowage, in the forecabin particularly, is remarkable. You flow through the interior with hand-holds ever-ready and relax in comfort. Move the toilet forward 6in and she's perfect.
9/10

CHART TABLE
Despite just 2in below the table, stowage is good and instrument space is adequate in these days of multifunction displays. The table is a decent size, well fiddled and thoughtfully lit, and it's a comfortable and secure space. The old school will be happy.
9/10

GALLEY
The J-shape means she's secure regardless of tack. Stowage is abundant and well ventilated, the stove is very well gimballed and its bay lined with aluminium for easy cleaning. Workspace is good and the coolbox insulation is 10cm (4in) deep. All it needs are locker fiddles.
9/10

HEADS
It's got the lot – a separate shower area, towel pegs, a door to protect that sumptuous teak, a vented and draining wet locker and a deep sink enclosed by an easy-to-clean liner. If the heads was brought forward 6in and a small curtain placed over the cockpit hatch, it's a 10.
9/10

TOTAL SCORE

She glided between zephyrs and with her pedigree she should comfortably plough through any weather at passage-pounding speed. Below, she's secure, luxurious, exceptionally well built and the basic spec is comprehensive. She's not cheap but you could sail a lifetime and never find quality to match. If you've grown up and calmed down – and made a few bob – book a test sail and prepare to be impressed.

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